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THE FUTURE OF CANADA.

By Hon. J. W. LONGLEY,

Attorney-General of Nova Scotia.



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[The within article is such a clean-cut presentation of the necessity and wisdom of the free discussion of the Future of Canada, that the undersigned ventures to reprint it, with a desire to aid in its wide distribution. The vast importance of the subject, the ever present disposition to discuss it, and above all the wisdom of permitting the freest expression of opinion, justifies every friend of his country in the attempt to elicit all that can be said in regard to its destiny.—ERASTUS WIMAN.]

THE FUTURE OF CANADA

by ERASTUS WIMAN

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THE FUTURE OF CANADA.

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Though the most important and far-reaching question that can possibly engage the attention of the Canadian people, it is only very recently that any large number of Canadians have begun to manifest any real interest in it. The present is fairly comfortable, and the tendency among masses is to be indifferent to all matters which do not actually press themselves upon their notice by some palpable inconvenience. Yet it seems beyond all doubt that Canadians will, sooner or later, realize that the problem must be seriously faced. Differences of opinion may and must continue to exist as to the wisest and best solution, but all thoughtful persons must agree that colonists we cannot always remain, and many will recognize that it is not honorable nor desirable that colonists we should much longer remain.

While the time has past for being indifferent, the time has not yet come for dogmatizing. A great many things have to be carefully, indeed anxiously, weighed. The stage of discussion has been reached and it is the duty of intelligent men to think about it, to reflect gravely upon

the question, and speak fully and without passion or prejudice in regard to the issue.

The purpose of this paper is simply to clear the ground so that the discussion, which is bound to come, may be rational and fair. More than one alternative is presented to the Canadian people, and if a wise decision is to be reached, the most absolute and unfettered freedom must be afforded for presenting all sides of the question. This statement is necessary because many of those who are speaking upon this momentous question approach it as if it were base or treasonable to advocate any other than one alternative. We are constantly reminded that we are British subjects and owe allegiance to the British Sovereign, and that it is, therefore, wicked, ungrateful and ignoble to suggest any alternative except that associated with the British Empire. We are at liberty to accept any changes within the scope of British citizenship, but to go outside would be traitorous and vile. It may be that our true interests will continue to be bound up with the Empire of which we at present form a part, but most men will prefer to reach this conclusion after a careful examination and full investigation of all the other alternatives.

Speaking in general terms, it may be said that Canadians have the choice of at least four alternatives:

First.—Remaining as we are—a colonial possession of the empire.

Second.—A direct political alliance with the empire, involving representation in the nominal councils and a share in the responsibilities and achievements of the whole nation.

Third.—Political union with the great English nation lying beside us on this continent, with whom we are in-

timately associated and connected by geography, race, language, laws and civilization.

Fourth.—An independent nationality with our own flag and our own national responsibilities.

These four seem to embrace all the alternatives within the range of practical politics. Of course, it is open to the Canadian people to seek an alliance with France, Germany or any other nation, but such solutions are simply imaginative and do not represent any principle or reason. But each one of the four presented are natural, and on behalf of any one of them much can be said. All of them are in the minds of thoughtful people, and all are so far within the range of the possible and practical that they ought to be weighed carefully, and no decision should be reached until the contingencies which each presents have been maturely considered.

I am going to repeat the remark that no wise conclusion can be reached unless there be untrammelled discussion, and, therefore, there must be no degrees of virtue in the advocacy of one alternative over another. There can be no discussion at all if such a thing as gag law be applied. Therefore, I lay down the wide principle that any citizen of Canada is absolutely free to advocate any one of the four alternatives presented, and as free to advocate one as another. Nor can the position of the citizen in any way affect this right. What is honorable for an independent citizen to do cannot be dishonorable for an office-holding citizen to do, and what is base and improper for a man holding office to say or do in respect of the destinies of his country cannot possibly be right and high-minded in a man not holding office. In this view I must, with great reluctance, on account of the great respect and regard I have for Sir Oliver Mowat, respectfully take

issue with his action in relation to his officer, Mr. Elgin Myers, Q.C. There is no man in Canada for whom I have greater esteem than the able and high-minded Premier of Ontario. I am his political friend and I trust his personal friend as well. Nor do I deny his right to remove officers serving under him who are distasteful to him. But with a full sense of the responsibility of my words, I declare that I know of no law, civil or moral, which prevents Mr. Elgin Myers or any other Canadian from advocating political union with the United States. That he is a sworn official has nothing to do with the case, so far as I can see. Sir Oliver Mowat is the Premier and Attorney-General of Ontario: is there any law which commands him to remain silent if his judgment becomes satisfied that the union of this country with the United States would be the best destiny available for his country?

John Bright, one of the bravest and most patriotic Britons of modern times, while a member of the Parliament of Great Britain and under the obligations of an "oath," if that could make any difference, repeatedly advocated the union of Canada and the United States in the most clear and emphatic terms. Here are his words:

"I should say that if a man had a great heart within him he would rather look forward to the day when from that point of land which is habitable nearest the pole to the shores of the great gulf the whole of that vast continent might become one great confederation of states—without a great army and without a great navy—not mixing itself up with the entanglements of European politics—without a custom house inside through the whole length and breadth of its territory—and with freedom everywhere, law everywhere, peace everywhere—such a confederation would afford at least some hope that man is not forsaken of Heaven, and that the future of our race may be better than the past."—*Rochdale, Dec. 4th, 1861.*

Again:

"I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen north in unbroken line to the glowing south, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main,—and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all that wide continent the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and every clime."

Birmingham, Dec. 18th, 1862.

Is there any Canadian so spiritless as to deny to himself the same right to speak of the destiny of his own country which is enjoyed without question by a member of the English Commons? I am an official and an adviser of the Queen's representative in the Province of Nova Scotia. I am bound to discover all plots and intrigues against the constituted authority and government of the country. If any persons were discovered banding themselves together by secret conspiracy to hand over this country to a foreign power, or clandestinely drilling or making preparations for armed effort, it would be my duty, as it would be my solicitude and pride, to bring them instantly to justice. But that is quite another matter from openly exercising the privileges of free speech, and by fair argument and honest reason seeking to convince the judgment of their fellow countrymen.

The especial advocates of the Imperial Federation idea always seek to deprive the subject of the character of a fair debate upon the merits. It is their favorite idea to recall the glories of the British Empire, the pleasant relations which have always existed between the Canadian provinces and the home government, the obligations which we have incurred by accepting for so many years the fostering care and protection of the old flag, and the bonds of fealty by which we are bound to the old land.

All these may be admitted. But, after all, there is a purely practical side to the question. Incidents surround the matter which cannot be ignored. While primarily British subjects, and owning a willing allegiance to the Sovereign who rules over the British Empire, the time must necessarily arrive when a given number of millions of people, with a splendid country, and separated by some thousands of miles from the cradle of the race, must seriously consider the special interests of their own country. It is idle to talk of Canada and Great Britain as one country. Notwithstanding the political ties which now bind us together, they are essentially two countries, and it may happen to the intelligent recognition of both that a point will be reached when their interests may lie in divergent directions. The problem is this: Here is a mother country great and powerful to-day. From her shores some colonists set sail some day and take possession of a new land of large dimensions. The colony is founded and seeks and freely obtains, from motives of mutual interests and glory, the protection and support of the mother land. The position is recognized fully on both sides. Years pass by, and the colony grows and prospers, until at length it assumes national proportions. The relation of colony, which sat naturally and becomingly once, becomes not only inconvenient, but almost ridiculous when efflux of time has developed a puissant nation. The moment comes when, with the kindest of feeling, the younger community lays aside the garb of dependence and assumes the becoming robe of independence. Is there anything unnatural, ungrateful or base in this? I confess frankly I cannot so regard it. On the other hand, it seems perfectly natural and proper.

Again, in the discussion of this question, sentiment is

appealed to in the most vehement manner. Upon this point there is need of clear definition. In the work of building up a nation there must needs be sentiment—without it there can be no consolidation, no strength, no permanency. A man's country is, in an enlarged sense, his home. For it he must have love, and in it he must have pride. No wise person would think of denying this. But there must be more than mere sentiment in the constitution of a nation. To have success in national life there must be community of interest in the component parts. But coming to the case of Canada, where we are anxiously appealing to sentiment among the people in settling its destiny, it is a proper question to ascertain to what and to whom the generous instincts of a lofty patriotism are due. That Canadians should love their country and bend every energy to its prosperity and glory none will deny. But here comes in the blunt question.—What is the Canadian's country? Is it Canada, or is it Great Britain? If the first and supreme obligations of patriotism belong to Great Britain, then love for Canada as such is practically treason. To state such a proposition is to demonstrate its absurdity. There is hardly a rational being within the bounds of this Dominion who will not agree that instinct as well as duty impel an unfaltering love and devotion to this, our own country, and inspire this as the first and irresistible impulse of every patriotic Canadian. We love our empire because it is our empire, and because our interests are at this moment bound up in its common welfare. But it does not follow that the time will not come when Canadians will have a right to decide that their interests and those of Great Britain diverge, and their duty demands a separate career. Let us not ignore the value and power of sentiment, but let

us also see that it is properly conceived and rightly directed. If any devoted imperialist doubts the accuracy of the proposition that the period can ever arise when a colony, so-called, can honorably assume the responsibilities of a separate nationality, let him suppose, if he will, that Canada shall remain a colony for the next eighty years. By that time the population will probably be about forty millions and the accumulated wealth enormous. The population of the British Isles is not likely to increase much in that period, and we shall have the problem: Great Britain forty millions and Canada forty millions.—Who will say that one country has better right to independent national existence than the other, or that one is under any more loyal obligation to be a dependency of the other? I understand the contract between a colony and a parent country to be fittingly illustrated by the contract between parent and child. During the period of childhood there is to be protection on the part of the parent and obedience and devotion on the part of the child. When the child is grown up it is his duty as well as his right to seek and assume the responsibilities of life on his own account, if a son, or, if a daughter, to bid a fond adieu to the old home and bathed in paternal blessings to seek a new home under entirely different auspices.

But the imperialist will say that the interests of Canada are most intimately bound up with the British Empire, and consequently the best possible course for us is to become a co-ordinate part, sharing its responsibilities and its fortunes. This is a fair proposition; it is one well worthy to be discussed. But it involves another proposition absolutely essential to all discussion whatever—namely, the right of the Canadian people freely to decide the

question. If the best interests of Canada are to be subserved by Imperial Federation, then I am for Imperial Federation, because I am for the best interests of Canada, and because I claim the right as a Canadian to decide the destinies of my country according to its highest interests. But while I am listening intently to the proposition of my imperialist friend, another steps forward and says: But I am prepared to show that the best interests of Canada will be subserved by an independent national existence. True, the sentiment lies in that direction. We have a great heritage, and are fast developing a deep-seated national pride. To us Canada is the dearest name among the nations of the earth. Let us have faith and courage, and facing the awful responsibilities of to-day, bequeath to our children a country worthy of their love and bright with glorious promise. To quote the stirring words of Roberts:

"How long the indolence, ere thou dare
Achieve thy destiny, seize thy fame,—
Ere our proud eyes behold thee bear
A nation's franchise, nation's name?"

Here, then, I have two distinct propositions presented to my consideration. Both appeal to the instincts of patriotism, and alike inflame the imagination. Both present features well worthy of serious reflection from the standpoint of material interest. How can I or any other Canadian upon whom will be imposed the responsibility of ultimately deciding the question, reach an intelligent and wise decision unless the fullest latitude be given to the discussion of the relative merits of both? And what is the use of discussion at all if there be some occult, mysterious and overshadowing obligation to Great Britain, which renders it dishonorable for me and my fel-

low Canadians to exercise our judgment and make a free choice?

As between Imperial Federation and Independence there are, after all, few rational beings in Canada who will question the right of the Canadian people to fairly discuss and freely decide. A few gushing loyalists may rave, but the innate common sense of the Canadian people will decide once and for all that the Canadian people are free to choose their own destiny. But there is one step farther to go before we have cleared the ground for a fair discussion of the question.

After my Imperial Federation friend has dazzled me with his pictures of a united empire, and my Canada first friend has influenced me with the glories of an independent national life, yet a third steps forward and claims my attention. What is his message? Let him speak, and give him respectful audience: "Why need we seek alliances with European countries," he says, "when we have the full outlines of a most perfect civilization on our own continent? Why do you seek to impose upon Canadians the burden of maintaining a standing army simply to take a hand in the selfish game of European diplomacy? Beside us on this continent is a nation that within the compass of a little more than a century has outstripped in population, in accumulated wealth, and internal resources, the greatest of European nations. She stands without a rival in industrial progress. Every citizen is a wage-earner and a producer, while every nation in Europe is supporting hundreds of thousands of men in idleness so far as productive returns are concerned, solely as a national police, and a necessary safeguard against invasion and conquest. In America standing armies are needless, because we are not concerned in the wastes and

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burdens which afflict the military-ridden nations of modern Europe. Beside us and sharing the continent with us is a nation speaking the same language, sprung from the same race, and animated by the same impulses as ourselves. The United States was once a colony like ourselves, and derived its origin from the same cradle. With its enormous progress it must in time have established an independent nationality in any case. Under normal conditions the communities which now constitute Canada would have been linked with the communities which now form the United States. Unfortunately incidents occurred more than a century ago which caused them to separate from the mother-land in anger and by force. We in Canada represent, for the most part, the descendants of those who preferred to stand by the empire. But history has decided that the resisting colonists were justified, and time has demonstrated that as descendants of the great Anglo-Saxon race they had the capacity for self-government and the power to achieve the most wonderful national progress the world has ever seen. Time has mellowed the old animosities and completely changed the conditions under which our ancestors separated from theirs. Why should we longer remain apart? Our interests are identical. Why should we form an alliance with less than forty millions of people in a country several thousands of miles away and with national interests distinctly diverse, when we can form an alliance with over sixty millions at our own doors with common national interests? The forty millions in the British Islands have pretty nearly reached their measure of expansion, but the sixty millions of English-speaking people beside us will soon become hundreds of millions, and exercise a commanding influence among the

nations of the earth. Why should we load ourselves with the burdens of a separate national government when under a federal system, one central executive can govern a whole continent as effectively as half a continent? Do we want a destiny that will fire the imagination? Then let us take John Bright's advice, and unite the great English race in North America and bequeath to our children a scope and a destiny unparalleled in the annals of mankind. In so doing we shall be rendering the greatest service in our power to the great nation to which we now belong, and to which we are bound by so many ties of honor and affection. To the great English-speaking communities which have sprung from her loins, Great Britain must look for her allies and supporters in her great civilizing mission in the world. The only cause of friction between Britain and her greatest offspring is Canada. The petty disputes about fisheries, seals, canals, railways and bonding privileges are the sole remaining hindrance to an absolutely friendly alliance. Let us then with Britain's consent seek an equal alliance with our separated brothers, and make our changed allegiance the occasion of a treaty of perpetual friendship and mutual defence between the two great nations of the English race."

This is the third proposition: presented to my consideration by the advocate of a United North America. What he says, be it understood, may be all fallacy—if this be so, it can be demonstrated. It may be that the proposition he propounds is one which it would be dishonorable and unmanly for the Canadian people to accept. If this be so can we not trust the logic of the imperialist and the intelligence of the Canadian people to make this clear? What I am contending for is that all these

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questions must be discussed, and discussed on even terms. The advocate of Political Union with the United States has as good a right to present his case to the Canadian people as the imperialist, and the people who desire to reach a right conclusion are bound to hear and weigh everything that can be offered upon the question—the momentous question of Canada's destiny. The supreme point, as I conceive it, is which alternative stands for the best interests of Canada? How can I decide without hearing *all* sides? Is imperialism the true solution? Then let the advocates of imperialism take the platform and demonstrate their case. Is continentalism wrong and unsound? Then what is the difficulty of so demonstrating to the intelligent thinking people of Canada? If there is anything that will throw doubt and discredit upon a cause, it is the fear to challenge the crucial test of fair, open and manly discussion.

I said at the beginning that my only object in this article was to clear ground, not to give opinions on the merits of the several proposals. Indeed I have no definite opinions to give. In common with most of my fellow citizens, I do not conceive that the moment has arrived for making a decision on this vast question, but I recognize that the moment is approaching. There is no need of haste, and yet every reason for thought. Of the four alternatives presented above there is only one upon which I have any settled convictions, and that is in relation to the first. I am clear that the existing condition of things cannot and ought not to last. If British subjects we are to remain, then I say, a thousand times better that we be a co-ordinate part than a mere dependency of the empire. If I am to accept Great Britain's protection then I want to be a man and pay my share of

the shot; and if I am to share the fortunes of the British Empire I want to have a say in shaping these fortunes. If there be a career of glory within the compass of the national service I wish that career open to me and to my children.

But in reaching a decision in this overshadowing question, whether my moral instincts be right or wrong, I propose to be guided solely by my conceptions of the best interests of Canada. I put this first and make it supreme. If the interests of Canada are identical with the interests of Great Britain, well; if they come in conflict in any form I shall take my stand on the side of Canada. In the years to come, as this question of Canada's destiny becomes from day to day more pressing and immediate, I shall listen respectfully to all who have views to present. I shall not be afraid to seek light from any quarter or any source. I shall listen and give as full weight to whatever is urged by the advocates of political union with the United States as to that which is presented by the Imperialists. I maintain positively and unreservedly that any citizen of Canada, in office or out of office, has the same right to stand upon the public platform and advocate by fair argument union with the United States, as any other citizen has to advocate Federation with the Empire, or independent national life. There is no official in the Dominion of Canada, from the Prime Minister down, whose oath of office precludes him from standing on any platform in Canada and telling his countrymen, when it becomes his duty to express his views, his conscientious convictions as to the wisest and best course for them to pursue in deciding the destinies of the country.

Because I have put in a plea for fair discussion, I have

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no doubt I shall be charged, as has often been done before, with being an advocate of political union with the States. This will be entirely without foundation. I never advocated political union, and if I were compelled to make a choice of the alternatives to-day, I would not vote for political union. But I do wish the question intelligently threshed out. Up to this point there has been no fair discussion of this great question in Canada. The advocate of Imperialism has mounted himself on the platform of a lofty abstract loyalty, and any one who dared to suggest any destiny for Canada that did not find its centre in Downing Street was a traitor and a scoundrel. So eminent a man as Professor Goldwin Smith, whose devotion to the empire has borne the test of sixty years of eminent services in the paths of literature, and who to-day would be an honored guest in the homes of the highest public men in England, has ventured to express the opinion that the true interests of the empire, and of Canada alike, would be promoted by a union of English speaking people on this continent. For this he has been bespattered with mud by blatant loyalists, who were thinking of nothing but the interests of their party. Mr. John V. Ellis, ex-M. P. for St. John, in his newspaper mildly presented a similar view, and a partisan howl was sent up that he had violated the oath which he had taken as a member. Mr. Ellis violated no oath, but if he did he was in good company, for John Bright violated the same oath and in the same fashion, under the very eye of Her Majesty, and in the heart of her dominions, and no person said aught.

Let the discussion go on, and let it be fair. Let there be no gag law. Let there be no attempt to dragoon a free people into a detestable hypocrisy and a mean con-

cealment. If there be any men in Canada who believe in political union with the United States let them speak their minds freely. If they are wrong, the Imperialist will have the grateful task of exposing their fallacies. One end, and one only, should be kept in view on this subject—a full and honest discussion and a sober and wise decision by the Canadian people upon the question of the destiny of the Canadian people.

In furtherance of the suggestions in the foregoing article, as to the need of the freest discussion of the Future of Canada, the following announcement is made :

"Annexation is unnecessary,—it is undesirable,—it is in our day impossible."
—Speech in Toronto, October, 1890.

RELATIONS

BETWEEN THE

United States and Canada.

MR. ERASTUS WIMAN has the honor to announce that he will deliver four Addresses in the Maritime Provinces as follows :

UNRESTRICTED RECIPROCITY, — How it would benefit Great Britain, and perpetuate her presence on the North American Continent. Halifax, N. S., October 24, in Masome Hall.

COMMERCIAL UNION, — How it would Enrich Canada, and maintain her Loyalty. New Glasgow, N. S., October 26, in McNeal's Hall.

CONTINENTAL UNITY, — How it would Enlarge the Opportunities of the United States, for the benefit of Canada. Charlottetown, P. E. I., October 27, in Market Hall.

ANGLO-SAXON UNITY, — The Hope of the World. St. John, N. B., October 28, in Mechanics Institute.

MR. WIMAN desires it to be understood that he is not in any way connected with local organizations: he seeks no political patronage or backing, and simply proposes to discuss, in a dispassionate way, the above important topics from an economic point of view, paying his own charges, and asking only the favor of a courteous hearing.

From the New York World.—Last night at Montclair, N. J., the fifth of the series of debates on Current Topics took place in the beautiful Club House of that town, the contestants being T. J. McElroy, the Managing Editor of the *New York Tribune*, and Erastus Wiman. The subject, as stated, was: "What shall we do with Canada?" Mr. McElroy's speech, tersely reported, was, "Annex It." Mr. Wiman's contention, with equal brevity, was, "Trade with It!" The position maintained by each of these clever experts well illustrates the difference in opinion with which this question is viewed by those in this country who have given the subject the attention which its importance merits.